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**BILINGUALS vs. MONOLINGUALS APPROACHING SECOND AND
ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**

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“To remain monolingual reduces the mind to the confines of a tramline.”

Sybille Bedford, *Quicksands: A Memoir*.

ABSTRACT

Second and additional language acquisition is a field of applied linguistics which is considered to be of a significant importance due to the fact that it allows linguists to achieve a better understanding of how a second language is learnt, and whether managing two languages can affect, either positively or negatively, to further language learning. Thus, the present project is aimed at examining several studies and experiments that researchers have done based on the hypothesis of bilingual speakers having advantages on additional language acquisition, in opposition to monolinguals speakers.

Key-words: language acquisition, monolingualism, bilingualism, multilingualism

RESUMEN

La adquisición de segundas lenguas y de lenguas adicionales es un campo de la lingüística aplicada que se considera de gran importancia ya que permite a lingüistas tener un mayor entendimiento de cómo se adquiere una segunda lengua y, además, si el hecho de dominar dos lenguas puede afectar (positiva o negativamente) al aprendizaje de otras. Por consiguiente, este trabajo pretende analizar diversos estudios y experimentos que se han llevado a cabo por diferentes investigadores, los cuales se han basado en la hipótesis de que las personas bilingües tienen ventajas a la hora de adquirir lenguas adicionales, en oposición a personas monolingües.

Palabras clave: adquisición del lenguaje, monolingüismo, bilingüismo, multilingüismo

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language has been the focus of many studies over the last century: linguists, psychologists and researchers have been dealing with different questions and hypothesis regarding language learning and acquisition processes. There are some theories based on how children acquire one language – three of these will be discuseed in section two. However, nowadays, there has been an increased interest in the field of second language acquisition. Consequently, some questions have been contemplated and studied, which still cause controversy among researchers. One of these is the observation and analysis of bilinguals and monolinguals speakers in the process of learning a second and/or an additional language. The present project is aimed at reviewing different studies that have been done in relation to this topic. To do so, the third section will be devoted to second language acquisition, in which the main differences between first and second language acquisition will be presented together with a discussion about monolingual against bilingual children and adults acquiring a second language. Then, the fourth section will explore the concept of bilingual education and it will analyze two experiments carried out in bilingual areas of Spain to see if bilingualism has any effect on third language learning. Finally, this paper will introduce the concept of multilingualism that, indeed, concerns the current 21st century society, to finally lead to the conclusions.

2. FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Language is an exclusively human ability which starts to develop since a baby is on his or her first weeks of life. From that moment, the first language acquisition process begins. First Language Acquisition (FLA) is a process whereby children from infancy through early

school years acquire their first languages. Indeed, how this procedure takes place has been – and still is – a controversial subject in linguistics. During decades, different theories have been proposed to explain first language acquisition. According to Lightbown & Spada (2006), the three main perspectives that explain how FLA takes place are the following: the behaviourist, the innatist and the interactional/developmental.

2.1. The behaviourist perspective

Behaviourism was highly influential in the 1940s and 1950s. B. F. Skinner was one of the most well-known defenders of this theory for first language acquisition whose main argument is based on the importance of the environment as an essential element for language learning. It is believed that children imitate the utterances they hear in their surroundings. Thus, being encouraged by their environment, they will continue repeating what they hear or see until they finally obtain habits of correct language use. In other words, “speech is the practical reaction (response) to some stimulus” (Gass & Selinker, 2008, p. 91). However, if imitation and practice are the key elements for a child to acquire language habits, do they spend their days repeating everything they hear? They do not seem to repeat words at random. Instead, there is a selective imitation in children’s utterances: what they choose to imitate and repeat are not arbitrary concepts but just the new ones until the word or the sentence in question is perfectly introduced in their language system.

2.2. The innatist perspective

Even though the behaviourist perspective displays a good and verifiable explanation for the process of children’s first language acquisition by means of repetition which leads to the

overgeneralization of the language system, still there is a gap to which the behaviourism cannot account for: how kids acquire the complex grammar structures. That is why some linguists were forced to look for other ways to explain this first language acquisition process.

Noam Chomsky is the figure who stirred up the field of linguistics and psychology, and also the language acquisition studies that were done in the 20th century. He challenged the innatist perspective by claiming that the property of language use is innate and, therefore, all human beings are born with a series of grammatical rules underlying all languages. Chomsky gave a name to these innate rules which is Universal Grammar (UG). This UG will contribute to prevent the children from wrong hypotheses of the language use that they may find in the environment they are exposed to. That is to say, for Chomsky, babies are born with language tools which they will apply to understand the language they hear and how the language system works. Infants are not filled up with language knowledge by means of repetition and imitation: they born already informed, in a way. Therefore, as Cook (1985) claimed “their growth is the realization of their genetic potential in conjunction with ‘triggers’ from the environment, the achievement of something that was within them from the start.” This perspective does not discard the presence of the environment as part of the language acquisition but it is simply seen as a source of data to which children apply the grammatical rules they are born with and allow them to discover the complex grammar structures that exist behind the input they receive.

Chomsky is also related with the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) which states that humans are biologically created to acquire language but there is a time limit for this acquisition to be successfully accomplished. That is to say, when an important period of time has passed by and a child has not been in contact with any language input, the language acquisition process gets more difficult to achieve, if not impossible. There are two well-

known cases in which children have been taken away from any language contact. For instance, as Lightbown & Spada (2006) explained, there is the case of Victor, a boy who was found naked in the woods in France. When he was captured, he was a twelve-year-old boy who has spent these years in the middle of nature, placed apart from society. A specialized doctor spent years trying to teach him language but, even though he succeeded in some aspects, the final result was so far away from a normal language ability development.

2.3. The interactionist/developmental perspectives

As occurred with the behaviourist theory, Chomsky's ideas were not supported by all the intellectuals specialized in language acquisition development. Concretely, cognitive and developmental psychologists and psycholinguists argued that innatism was too much focused on brain features devoted to language acquisition. Instead, they proposed a way to explain language acquisition which is hybrid of both theories already existing: they maintain the importance of the environment from the behaviourist perspective without rejecting the innate ability of children to develop language.

One of the most remarkable figures in that perspective is Jean Piaget. The psychologist claimed that the child develop its cognitive abilities to understand the world by means of the physical interaction with it. In that way, language is the tool used by children to acknowledge their understanding of the environment.

Lev Vygotsky is also considered an important researcher who contributes to this hybrid theory of language acquisition. The focus of his study was the observation of both conversation between children and between children and adults. As a conclusion, he stated that the social factor is crucial in the development of children language. It is in this social

atmosphere where the child can perform his or her language knowledge successfully. Vygotsky called this the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) where infants' speech can truly emerge. Vygotsky differs from Piaget's view in the fact that the former believes that the achievement of language production results from social interaction, whereas the latter maintains that children, individually, interact and discover their environment and language is the means by which they express their own interpretation of the reality surrounding them.

A general overview of the three different perspectives regarding first language acquisition can shed light into the fact that the behaviourist perspective covers the explanation for child's acquisition of vocabulary and different morphemes, which are, actually, lower grammar structures. In the same way, the innatist perspective contributes to the understanding of how the complex grammar is acquired and, finally, the developmental or interactionist theory displays the children comprehension of the world and, therefore, their ability to put this knowledge into words, as well as how they perform in conversational setting properly (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

3. SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is a process whereby someone learns a language which is not their native or first language. Therefore, the process of learning any other language which is not the mother tongue would be considered as the process of second language acquisition. In the previous section, the stages of first language acquisition were analyzed, and it is worth considering that, both first and second language acquisition processes are somehow interrelated. From the point of view of Houmanfar, Hayes and Herbst (2005, as cited in Nemati & Taghizadeh, 2013, p. 2477), "the first and second languages are

interrelated, and the history of the first language is a participatory factor in the acquisition of the second language (L2) and its maintenance.” However, as described in the section above, L1 acquisition is considered to be a process which starts in the early childhood. Bearing this in mind, as Cook (2010, p. 140) argues, L2 learners “are older and more mature than the L1 child and so have whatever advantages that age confers in terms of working memory, conceptual and social development, command of speech styles, and so on.” In other words, the age factor allows people to have language itself as a basis to learn the second language: they do not start from scratch. According to Lightbown & Spada (2006, p. 30), although “all second language learners, regardless of age, have already acquired at least one language,” therefore, this knowledge “can lead learners to make incorrect guesses about how the second language works.” All in all, although first and second language acquisition are related, researchers have been studying the relevant differences that should be taken into account when considering the SLA process in opposition to FLA. Al Ghazali (2006) exposes five areas in which SLA differs from FLA; three out of these five will be discussed below as the relevant ones, according to my experience as a teacher, which are: the age factor, the psychological factor and the context of acquisition.

3.1. Differential factors between SLA and FLA

3.1.1. Age Factor

Which is the appropriate age to learn and master a second language? According to Lightbown & Spada (2006), “cognitive maturity and metalinguistic awareness allow older learners to solve problems and engage in discussions about language.” Since second language learners have at least one language already acquired, this basis allows them to go further in the understanding of how another language may work, and also it gives them

some strategies in language learning and production. Yet, in spite of this language experience that second language learners have, the Critical Period Hypothesis is something to take into consideration. As explained in the previous section, the CPH suggests that, up until a concrete age, the success in the process of acquisition of a language is barely possible. In other words, “adults no longer have the same plasticity as children that would enable them to cope with new mental activities” (Al Ghazali, 2006, p.3). From the scientific and biological point of view, the CPH seems to be a reasonable inconvenient for language acquisition at a given age. Yet, Al Ghazali believes that it is sometimes used as an excuse, and claims that the cognitive developments, knowledge of the world and language experience which adults have do help them “achieve satisfactory levels of language proficiency in remarkably short periods.” (p. 4).

3.1.2. Psychological factors

Along with the age factor, there are some psychological aspects that may have an impact on second language acquisition. For instance, the motivation which learners can have towards learning another language can affect positively throughout the process. Personal interests such as obtain a higher recognition when applying for a job or the interest one may find in other cultures can be huge encouraging factors to start and do not give up learning a language. Still, at the same time, any sign of failure during the process (grammar difficulties, oral production...) may directly lead the learner to discouragement and frustration, and finally the feeling of not being capable of achieve their language goal. However, children are always supported by their caretakers in language production. Furthermore, they “simply are not aware of mistakes and are not demotivated if they make mistakes” (Al Ghazali, 2006, p.11). And this is, evidently, something crucial young

first language learners have which maintain them focused on the acquisition process. On the contrary, embarrassment and negative thoughts might trigger impediments in SLA.

3.1.3. Context of acquisition

The setting in which FLA and SLA takes place is also an important factor to consider. Whereas FLA is considered to occur in a natural context, SLA is linked to the classroom setting (Nemati & Taghizadeh, p.2481). On account of this, the time of exposure to the language as well as the quantity and the quality of the input the learner receive is completely different. On the one hand, the child acquiring a first language is constantly exposed to the parents' input. On the other hand, the process of acquisition of second language learner is conditioned by timetables. As "children spend much more time listening to and practicing their native tongue than students in a language course do," (Nemati & Taghizadeh, p.2480) it is plausible to think that one cannot master a second language as proficiently as their L1. A classroom is a restricted space in which every day-like conversation rarely have place and "language is often used in isolated settings for fulfilling certain tasks" (Al Ghazali, 2006, p.4). As a result, second language is sometimes seen as something we have to learn to pass an exam, for instance; while on the contrary, FLA is seem to be more concerned with acquire a language for necessary and practical uses in life. Still, this last idea is nowadays a heated debate.

3.2. *Second language acquisition in bilingual and monolingual children*

According to Jayasundara (2015, p. 31), "Bilingual Acquisition during childhood can be regarded as an instance of simultaneous of two 'first' languages." Moreover, children who are exposed to two languages at the same time "are able to acquire competence of

each that does not substantially differ from the speaking ability of monolinguals.” Henceforth, it is plausible to start this section with the idea that early bilingualism does not have any negative linguistic effects, although it can involve “various problems from the social, pedagogical and psychological points of view,” as Volterra & Taeschner (1978, p. 311) claimed.

One of the main concerns among researchers towards child bilingualism is to describe and compare the acquisition of the two languages in contrast with the process of acquisition of the L1 in monolinguals. As Bialystok et al. (2009, p. 90) claimed, “Bilingual language acquisition is as effortless, efficient, and successful as monolingual acquisition.” Therefore, both bilingual and monolinguals kids start learning their languages from the same point: without any fixed rule, trusting in the information from the environment, as discussed in previous sections. However, even though they seem to achieve the acquisition of the language(s) in the same efficient way and under the same circumstances, there are some aspects in which bilinguals and monolinguals differ. As reported by Jayasundara (2015), these are the features that are worth considering when examining the bilingual children process of acquisition: the amount and type of input from each of the two languages, the possibility of an asymmetry or dominance of one language over the other and the interaction or separation of the two linguistic systems. Jayasundra also points at a fourth feature regarding socio-psychological factors but it will not be discussed in this paper since it will focus on linguistics aspects only.

3.2.1. Amount and type of input from each language

Whereas a monolingual child is exposed to one single language in a “uniform and homogeneous” way (Jayasundra, 2015, p. 32), bilingual children’s input consists of two

languages which are used alternatively. Hence, their linguistic data “is always divided” (p.32). As a consequence, Jayasundra states that the amount of data a bilingual kid receives of each language is smaller than the one from the monolingual, and, moreover, it is irregular. Nevertheless, if these differential traits remain consistent, “early bilinguals are remarkably close to two monolinguals in terms of development of formal features and mechanism of language acquisition (i.e. in the development of phonology and syntax).” Yet, in this point, Bialystok et al. (2009, p. 90) claimed that bilinguals “maintain and develop the categorical distinctions for the phonetic systems in both languages and monolinguals infants lose the ability to detect contrasts that are not part of the language they are about to learn.”

Jayasundara (2009, p.33) also states that it is worth mentioning that the input of a bilingual child could be separate (the father speaks one language and the mother the other one) or mixed (both parents talking the two languages alternatively). The variants on both the quantity and manner of input explained are perfectly represented in that image:

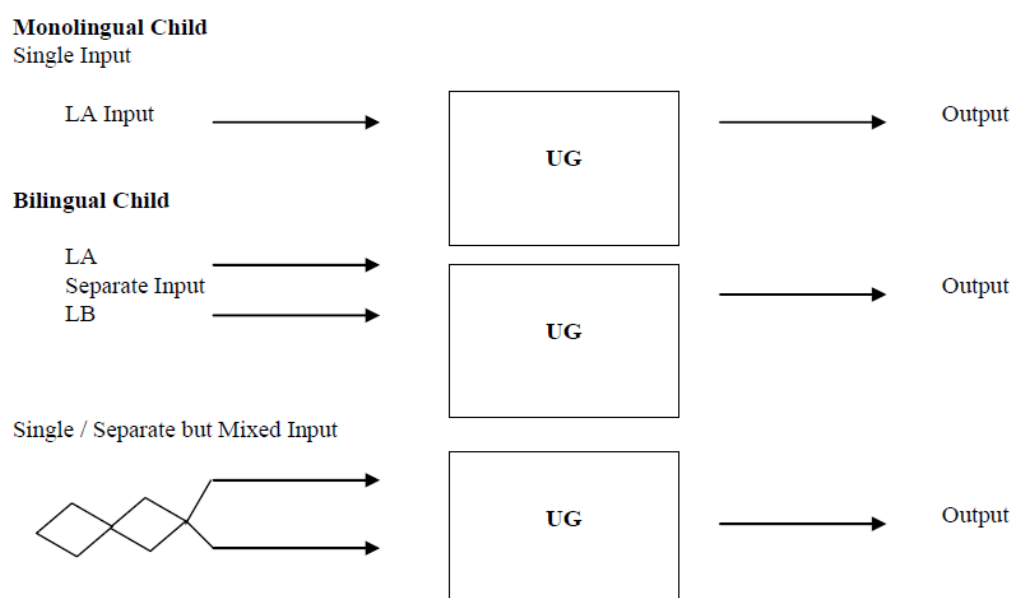


Figure 1 Language Input Schema

3.2.2. Asymmetry / Dominance between the two languages

This feature is directly based on personal factors. It is a mere decision of the speaker to give priority to one language and not to the other. Although it might have something to do with social issues; the speaker is, in the end, the one who establishes preferences among the languages him or her commands. The temporal and input relationship may also affect, that is the “lack of equal exposure to the two languages from birth” (Jayasundara 2009, p.33).

3.2.3. Interaction or separation of the two linguistic systems

Bilinguals can keep both systems separate and also make them interact. Consequently, as Jayasundara (2009, p.33) stated, “The result is code mixing and code switching behaviour on part of bilinguals.” But, are code mixing and code-switching a threat to the acquisition process? From the point of view of Genesee (2001, p.161), bilingual acquisition “poses certain risks to language development since evidence for grammatical constraints during code-mixing would argue for competence in coordinating two languages [...]” However, bilingual children —just as bilingual adults— develop strategies which are adapted to their language(s). Hence, Genesee (2001, p.163) concluded that children who born in a bilingual environment may own “cognitive-perceptual capacities that are prerequisite to establishing simultaneous differentiated representations of more than one language from the very outset of exposure to two languages.” In other words, the languages of the bilingual child are perfectly adapted to the grammar and, in general, the production of the target language(s). All in all, the studies that have been carried out regarding bilingualism in children completely question

the idea of the mind being designed to cope with the acquisition of one single language. Instead, results endorse “a view of the mind that is fundamentally capable of acquiring more than one language at the same time” (Genesee, 2001, p. 164).

3.3. Second language acquisition in bilingual and monolingual adults

Gray, S., Sanz, C., Morgan-Short, K., and Ullman, M.T. (2017) published a relevant experiment which is quite significant for that section. The aim of their work was to prove what others researchers have been suggesting about bilinguals being more efficient than monolinguals when learning an additional language. To do so, they exposed both early Mandarin-English bilinguals and English monolinguals adults to a target language, an artificial language: Brocanto2, designed following Brocanto (Frederici et al., 2002). Participants worked on comprehension and production of the language in question whilst their brain reactions were assessed by means of ERPs (event-related potentials). After analysing the results, the researchers concluded that, firstly, bilinguals displayed the use of mechanisms of reanalysis that are “commonly observed during syntactic processing in native speakers of languages” (Gray, S. et al., 2017, p. 988) even though they obviously had a low level of efficiency in the artificial language; secondly, only the monolingual speakers “needed to engage extra-linguistics attentional mechanism” (Gray, S. et al., 2017, p.988). All in all, what makes this experiment worth mentioning is the fact that it supports the strong belief among linguists of bilinguals having observable advantages at additional language learning.

3.4. *Monolingual bias in SLA*

The monolingual bias has been defined by Cenoz & Gorter (2011) as the presumption of monolingualism being “the default of human communication and that nativeness is a superior form of language competence” (as cited in Akbar, F.S., 2013, p. 42). As a consequence, SLA is often assessed based on the competence of native speakers. Therefore, L2 learners are pretty influenced by the pressure of becoming native-like in the mastery of the target language, which, for many researchers, is something that hardly ever happens. As Birdsong (1992, as cited in Cook, 1997, p. 36) stated, “failure to acquire the target language grammar is typical.” So, in Cook words, “L2 learners are failures” (1997, p. 36). But, to what extent is it fair to evaluate the L2 acquisition on the constant comparison to the native language competence? For Cook, “L2 users have to be looked at in their own right as genuine L2 users, not as an imitation of native speakers” (Cook, 1997, p.44). He claims that disregarding the individuality of the learner is what causes the trouble. Individual different among learners should have taken into account when doing research. So, may be selecting groups of people who share quite common characteristics, and, moreover, avoiding the tendency of compare them to the L1 speakers of the target language, would make the research more efficient. In the end, Cook’s idea is to spread consciousness about the necessity of “develop the handful of research that does treat the L2 learners in their own right” and to stop focusing on research results which no longer stand “when native comparison is removed” (Cook, 1997).

4. EFFECTS OF BILINGUALISM ON ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

As Cenoz & Hoffmann (2003, p.1) stated, “Third language acquisition is a very common phenomenon all over the world,” which “takes place in a large number of diverse sociolinguistic situations.” Evidently, a third language learner is someone who have already acquired two languages, hence, their previous condition as a bilingual have been the focus of interest of many studies which illustrate the idea of “the potential effects of bilingualism on L3 learning of grammar, compared to monolingual L2 learning” (Gray, S. et al., 2017, p. 972).

In this section, the belief of the positive effects that bilingualism has towards additional language learning is going to be discussed through the example of Catalonia and the Basque Country. These are two geographical areas of Spain which are bilingual: apart from Spanish, they use Catalan and Catalan languages respectively. Hence, they are good examples to see if people who have born mastering two languages, have consequences on additional language acquisition.

4.1. Bilingual education

Although ‘bilingual education’ is a hard term to define, and, sometimes, misunderstood, Baker (2009, p.131) easily defines it as school contexts where a second language “is used for content teaching.” This is not the same as students being taught a second language, intrinsically. Therefore, as Baker defends, second language lessons such as English in Spain would not be considered bilingual education in English. Still, it could be possible for some students to achieve bilingualism through these lessons. Nevertheless, Baker endorses what is called ‘strong’ types of bilingualism to fulfil a better bilingual

condition. One example of these ‘strong’ forms of bilingualism would be the Canadian model known as *immersion bilingual education*: students are “immersed in a second language, and become fluent in that language through content learning” (Baker, 2009, p.132).

The aim of bilingual education is nothing else but the accomplishment of bilingualism “at no cost to general academic achievement” (Baker, 2009, p.142). However, bilingual education is closely linked to local and national politics ambitions such as assimilation of immigrants or cultural diversity.

Whether bilingual education is effective or not, there is still controversial. Even though there is evidence from Canada (as mentioned above) for its immersion plans to be successful in children acquisition of another language and biliteracy, and, furthermore, students “tend to outperform their peers in mainstream monolingual programs” (Swain, 1997, as cited in Baker, 2009, p.144); some scholars still find bilingual education research is “too small-scale, narrow in measures of school and individual success” or “insufficiently objective” (Baker, 2009, p.144).

Taking into consideration the Basque Country and Catalonia, these are two bilingual communities where students are exposed to a bilingual education of Basque/Catalan and Spanish since kindergarten. In that way, Basque and Catalan people acquire their condition as bilingual speakers since they are born and it is reinforced throughout their academic years. Therefore, do they have any advantages when acquiring an additional language?

4.2. Evidence from the Basque Country

Cenoz & Valencia (1994) carried out an experiment aimed at proving if bilingualism has any effect on third language acquisition in a bilingual community, the Basque Country. Out of the 320 students who participated, the 48% were monolinguals in Spanish and the 52% were bilingual in Spanish and Basque. The procedure of the study consisted on the realization of five English language tests. Each of them covered a specific language skill: speaking, listening, reading, writing, and vocabulary and grammar. Moreover, participants had to fill a questionnaire which measured their attitudes toward learning English. A few days after the two-hour sessions, they were interviewed to measure their speaking ability in English. Leaving behind some other conclusions which are not of interest for that work, the results obtained in relation to their previous hypothesis showed that, as expected, bilingualism can be associated with higher levels of achievement in English language performance. This could be seen when analyzing the results of the different tests: the bilingual factor significantly improved the prediction of English language achievement. What is more, the significantly positive effect of bilingualism towards the acquisition of an L3 “was obtained regardless of the cognitive, sociostructural, social psychological and educational variables” (Cenoz & Valencia, 1994, p. 204). In conclusion, the experiment supports the idea of bilingualism having “a positive mediation effect on third language learning” (Cenoz & Valencia, 1994, p. 204). Furthermore, the findings also suggests that the use of Basque (an L2) as the language of instruction in school for students whose L1 (Spanish) is a dominant language in the community, can have a positive influence on the acquisition of a third language (English, in that case).

4.3.Evidence from Catalonia

Following the same line of research, Sanz (2000) carried out a similar experiment to contribute to the hypothesis that Cenoz & Valencia (1994) had confirmed before about bilingualism having positive effects on third language acquisition. To do so, she compared the acquisition of the English language as an L3 by Catalan/Spanish speakers in high school teenagers experiencing an immersion program, in contrast to the acquisition of English by monolinguals speakers of Spanish. First of all, participants (77 monolinguals and 124 bilinguals) were asked to fill a personal questionnaire which included questions about age, gender, motivations towards learning English, the exposure they have to it... During a second session, they had to complete the vocabulary and structure sections of the CELT English proficiency test (Harris & Palmer, 1970). The results that are relevant for that work were the ones obtained when focusing on motivation, exposure and bilingualism. When looking at the results of the tests, there was no interaction between motivation and exposure with bilingualism. Therefore, bilingualism is related to higher performance in the accomplishment of the test independently from the other factors. Hence, students in the Catalan immersion program showed an advantage as L3 learners in comparison to the participants from a monolingual school. As a conclusion, this study confirms that, indeed, there is “a positive relationship between Catalan/Spanish biliterate bilingualism and knowledge of English as a foreign language” (Sanz, 2000, p. 34). Therefore, it supports the evidence contributed by Cenoz & Valencia from the Basque Country: bilinguals do have an advantage over monolinguals on L3 acquisition.

5. MULTILINGUALISM

Needless to say, we live in an increasingly globalized world in which different languages and cultures are in contact. Not only at a national level, which would be the case of Spain, as we have seen in the previous section with the example of Catalonia and the Basque Country; but also among countries around the world. Together with globalization, Cenoz (2013, p. 4) considered that “transnational mobility of the population and the spread of new technologies” are also important factors that “contributed to the current visibility of multilingualism.” Taking into consideration how relevant these factors are in modern society, multilingualism can be described as “a powerful fact of life around the world, a circumstance arising, at the simplest level, from the need to communicate across speech communities” (Edwards, 2009, p. 447). Indeed, this need for managing other languages can be perfectly understood since, due to the factors mentioned before, speakers use a particular language to cover a specific communicative situation. For instance, a multilingual speaker may chat on the Internet in two different languages depending on who the interlocutor is but watch television in only one of these languages. Moreover, this same multilingual person can use one language to read books but another one to read technical texts (Cenoz, 2013, p.11). Therefore, as Cenoz (2013, p.5) stated, “Multilingualism is at the same time an individual and a social phenomenon.” In that way, there is a dialogue between an individual and society in which the person is not simply a speaker who masters many languages but someone who has the potential ability to use each of them for a concrete communicative purpose and to switch from one to another according to the speakers’ needs and convenience.

However, Edwards (2009, p. 462) more than seeing this multilingual ability as something useful, he refers to multilingualism as “an unremarkable phenomenon fuelled by necessity up to, but rarely beyond, appropriately useful levels of competence.” That is to say, multilingual

speakers may manage some languages but they hardly ever achieve a complete and successful command of any of them completely. On the contrary, Cenoz (2013, p.11) claimed that the multilingual condition in students allows them to “use their communicative resources in spontaneous conversation to the way languages are learned and taught at school.” Thus, a possible link can be established between the school methodology when teaching languages and the students’ own abilities “to a larger extent in formal education.”

6. CONCLUSIONS

The goal of this paper was to prove, firstly, if there was any difference between monolinguals and bilinguals speakers when learning a second language. Regarding this first thought, evidence of bilingual speakers having advantages when learning a second language has been proved in section 3, both in children and adults. Inevitably, this discussion led to wonder if the bilingual condition of some speakers would also have any benefit on third language learning and, indeed, they have. The experiments carried out by Cenoz & Valencia (1994) in the Basque Country and, later, by Sanz (2000) in Catalonia claimed not only that bilingual speakers have benefits, when compared to monolinguals, in the process of additional language acquisition; but also that the immersion programs in the minority language these two areas of Spain have in their schools is also one important factor which contributes to an efficient L3 or further additional languages learning. Thus, this is just pure evidence of language immersion being positive in relation to language acquisition without affecting the academic results of the students. That is why negative attitudes or social pressures towards language diversity would only reduce the possibility of developing further language skills. Finally, it is worth mentioning that, in the world we live nowadays, people

managing an important number of languages is something not only academically positive but also necessary. The need to be understood is constantly increasing in such a globalized world. Furthermore, the ability to manage several languages and the alternative use of them for concrete purposes constitutes the figure of a multilingual speaker as somebody who is completely adapted to the changeable world and not necessarily a proficient speaker of all the languages. Therefore, there is a necessity of stopping judging speakers by its level of competence and comparing them to native speakers. All in all, the monolingual bias has to be dropped of and the views of language acquisition and language learning have to be open to change as people and society do.

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